

The University of Chicago

AGOBARD OF LYONS
A NINTH-CENTURY ECCLESIASTIC
AND CRITIC

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1939

By
ALLEN CABANISS

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1941

The University of Chicago

AGOBARD OF LYONS
A NINTH-CENTURY ECCLESIASTIC
AND CRITIC

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1939

By
ALLEN CABANISS

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1941



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/IA41533910_0053

NOTE

This is the last chapter of the thesis. There are some internal references to earlier chapters. Typed copies of the full thesis are in the libraries of the University of Chicago.



CHAPTER VI

AGOBARD'S THOUGHT

In this chapter Agobard's thought will be treated under three heads: first, that part of his theology in which he is in general agreement with universal Christianity; secondly, that part of his theology which seems to be in accord with what later became Protestantism; thirdly, his thought about things secular, which may be subsumed under the designation political. Under the first heading there are many points at which both medieval and Reformation doctrine are in agreement. Under the second, however, the various points, apparently, are at variance from the principles of medieval theology.

The ninth century was a period in which doctrines had not become crystallized, as was the case later. It was Paschasius Radbertus' doctrine of the Eucharist, and not Ratramnus', which came to be the official view of the medieval Church, although in that day there was weighty opinion in favor of Ratramnus. It was the use of images advocated by Dungal and Jonas that later prevailed, rather than the iconoclasm of Charlemagne and Claudius. It was Amalarius' thoughts about worship, and not Agobard's, which secured the allegiance of medieval Christianity, though Amalarius was condemned as heretical at Kiersy. Thus, to say that some of Agobard's thought seems to be an anticipation of Protestantism is not to say that he was disloyal to the Church of his day. The Church of the ninth century and its thinkers must not be judged either by Tridentine or by Calvinist criteria.

His Theology in Outline

General.-- One cannot call Agobard of Lyons an especially original thinker in his theology, or for that matter, a consistent one. However, judged from the viewpoint of the three great creeds of the Church, he was orthodox. In his book against Felix of Urgel he quoted a part of the Athanasian Creed.¹ One may note

¹J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina

that he made the error of assigning it to Athanasius himself. In the Exhortatory Sermon, the point where he is professing the Trinitarian faith is really a canto made up of tags from the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.¹ He even used the Greek test-word ὁμοούσιον (of the same substance), instead of the Latin form of it (consubstantialiam).² He also quoted the Gloria Patri in proof of the orthodox belief.³ The whole book Against the Dogma of Felix of Urgel is a defense of the Chalcedonian formula of the doctrine of the Person of Christ. One may observe in it how heavily Agobard relied upon Cyril of Alexandria for his language,⁴ and how heartily he condemned Nestorius.⁵

Naturally Agobard, following in the main stream of Christian thought, accepted the dogma of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. This was presented nowhere more clearly than in this line from the book against Felix: "Catholics definitely proclaim (praedicant) that the Lord did not have a mother in his divinity nor a father in his humanity."⁶ It may be pressing a detail too far, but may not one call attention to the word praedicant? By this word Agobard seems to have said that not only did he along with all Catholics believe in the virgin birth of Christ, but something more - it is a dogma which he not only confessed but proclaimed.

Doctrine of Man.-- He had no sympathy for anyone who tried to relieve human beings of the sense of sin and of the need of humility. The abbot Fredegisus had made just such an effort, and was met with a vigorous response from Agobard.⁷ To Agobard all men were sinners, even the greatest and holiest. Against Fredegisus he cited the examples of the saints, who admitted their sinfulness and inadequacy, Abraham, Moses, David, the Syro-Phoenician woman, and many others. If anyone was really good enough to

(Paris: Migne, 1878ff.), CIV, 35. This series will be abbreviated as PL.

¹PL, CIV, 269-270. ²Ibid. ³PL, CIV, 273. ⁴See above, p.63.

⁵In modern times Nestorius has received a more favorable trial at the hands of scholars than he received at the Council of Ephesus, 431. Cf. J. F. Bethune-Baker, Nestorius and His Teaching (Cambridge: University Press, 1908); Nestorius, The Bazaar of Heracleides, trans. from Syriac by G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925). One should consult also F. Loofs, Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: University Press, 1914).

⁶PL, CIV, 43. ⁷PL, CIV, 156.

boast, it was surely the beloved John, but instead he humbly said: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."¹

Agobard offered no comfort to men who were good apart from faith. In the book against Felix, he mentioned those who disregarded Felix's heresy and continued to admire his manner of life.² Agobard did not grant the assumption that Felix's life had been blameless. In fact, he pointed out that Felix had been deceitful.³ Nevertheless, Agobard spoke against those who did not know that "a man's faith is not to be measured by his life, but his life is to be judged by his faith."⁴ For, he added in substance, many who have been orthodox have perished for not being moral, but no heretic is saved by being moral.⁵ He classed heresy with arrogance and lack of humility. Those who would please God must subject their spirits to him in all humility, and faith is the first step in the submission.⁶

Agobard then stressed fear as a motive in religion, though not the only motive. He wrote a letter to Bishop Ebbo of Rheims of which a fragment is extant. In this bit of writing he urged Ebbo to prepare a handbook of selections from Scripture, "which are especially useful for checking through fear (*per timorem*) the minds of men so that they be not raised up in vain presumption."⁷ He then suggested several passages as a possible beginning. Scripture, he said, was full of those two things most necessary for the moderation of human minds, "that is, hope and fear."⁸ He compared these two with a millstone, fear being the lower stone, hope, the upper.⁹ Both are necessary, fear tempers hope, hope tempers fear. "The heavenly physician wishes us to use such a combination as an antidote."¹⁰

When he wrote to Nibridius of Narbonne to ask for his assistance in urging Christians not to associate with Jews, Agobard did not hesitate to tell Nibridius to use fear as a means of doing this. "Hold (*tene*) whom you can, frighten (*terre*) whom you can."¹¹ Later, he wrote to the successor of Nibridius, Bartholomew, on certain miraculous occurrences. The people of Narbonne had had

¹PL, CIV, 161-162. ²PL, CIV, 34. ³PL, CIV, 33.

⁴PL, CIV, 35. ⁵Ibid. ⁶Ibid. ⁷PL, CIV, 323.

⁸PL, CIV, 324. ⁹Ibid. ¹⁰PL, CIV, 325. ¹¹PL, CIV, 113.

an epidemic of something which they called demon-possession, and were stricken with an irrational dread (irrationabili terrore).¹ Agobard considered this foolish, but admitted that God might use such fearful methods "to scourge men to knowledge and conversion."² But, inasmuch as he thought it was a manifestation of the devil's work, he advised that it be resisted, "that we not fear vain terrors," but that each believer "may lift up his heart to the fear (timorem) of God alone."³ Agobard's writings contain no livid pictures of hell, and nowhere make any references to purgatory.

Doctrine of Scripture.-- Agobard was thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. He wrote few paragraphs that did not contain a reference to the Bible or a quotation from it. The Scripture was for him a real authority, but he seemed also to have a rather independent attitude toward it. For instance, he did not hesitate to affirm that there are mistakes in it. In defending himself against the criticisms of the abbot Fredegisus, he said that the writers of the Bible were not careful about the rules of grammar.⁴ This was not because they did not know them, but rather for the sake of accommodation to those for whom it was written.⁵ One has undertaken an unnecessarily large labor in defending the Gospel-writer or translator in grammatical matters. It is the sense that counts, not the words.⁶

Agobard was well aware of diversities in the style of the authors of Scripture. Thinking that Paul was the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he noted that he was more eloquent in that letter than in his others.⁷ He explained this on the ground that Paul was more fluent in the Hebrew language than in the Greek!⁸ Fredegisus had said that the Holy Ghost had inspired in the apostles the beauty of the language in which they wrote, not a rustic style.⁹ Agobard thought that the Holy Ghost had only inspired the sense and the matter of their preaching rather than the actual words in their mouth.¹⁰ Otherwise the proper instrument of inspiration would have been Balaam's Ass, in which case the instrument would have known only the words and not the meaning.¹¹ The importance of the prophets and apostles was and is not in the

¹PL, CIV, 179. ²PL, CIV, 180. ³PL, CIV, 184.

⁴PL, CIV, 163. ⁵Ibid. ⁶PL, CIV, 164. ⁷PL, CIV, 168.

⁸Ibid. ⁹PL, CIV, 165f. ¹⁰PL, CIV, 166. ¹¹Ibid.

beauty of their language but in the power of God.¹

Agobard also had some slight notion of a critical use of translations of Scripture. Referring to a then current plague of eruptions in Narbonne, he compared them with the plagues of boils mentioned in Exodus and in I Samuel. His statement was:

These burnings (exustiones) about which we are disturbed may not be very different from the swelling blisters (vesicis), or as another version says (sicut alia editio dicit), from the boils (feruvris) brought upon the Egyptians, and those blisters (percussionibus) which the book of Samuel tells were inflicted upon the Philistines.²

A similar passage may be cited from the book against Amalarius:

....namely in that place, where the almighty Creator of man says to the man who he had formed out of the mire (limo) of the earth, or as another translation has it (sicut alia translatio habet), out of the dust (pulvere), "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."³

These remarks show that he did know more than one translation of Scripture, and that he considered no one of them authoritative. It may be noted, however, that these alternative readings which he mentioned are not very important, and do not affect the meaning of his argument.

A more interesting sample of his use of Scripture occurs in his book against the law of Gundobad. This book is undoubtedly one of the best pieces of Agobard's writing as regards the style, language, and literary value. It is full of dramatic apostrophies,⁴ epigrammatic sentences,⁵ rhetorical questions.⁶ He was filled with the vision of the universal extent of Christianity and Christian ideals.⁷ It was in the midst of this that he decided to quote Colossians 3:11. He did so in exactly the Vulgate form, except for the insertion of six words, thus:

....where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian and Scythian, Aquitanian and Langobard, Burgundian and Alaman, bondman and freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.⁸

This was taking a liberty with the language of the Bible, but certainly not with the spirit of it. Indeed this is a splendid example of a preacher's application of Scripture to a then modern need.

¹PL, CIV, 167. ²PL, CIV, 180. ³PL, CIV, 345.

⁴PL, CIV, 114. ⁵PL, CIV, 116, 118, 121.

⁶PL, CIV, 119, 121. ⁷PL, CIV, 114. ⁸PL, CIV, 115.

In his later life, Agobard was sensibly opposed to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. He realized the dangers of it, and did not hesitate to point this out when he wrote *against Amalarius*. He said that if Amalarius had studied Scripture more carefully and had really weighed its meaning, he would not have fallen into such foolishness of interpretation by means of fantastic and ridiculous allegories (per phantasticas ac ridiculas allegorias).¹ In the books, On the Correction of the Antiphonary and Against the Four Books of Abbot Amalarius, he made a detailed criticism of the absurdities of Amalarius' method.²

It will be observed that this rather vehement attack on allegorization came in Agobard's last years. It is true that he normally did make the obvious interpretation of the Scripture he cited, and did not go afield. However, he did fall occasionally into a method that was not literal. The best example of this is in one of his earlier letters, the one to Bernard of Vienne on the privilege and rights of the priesthood. It is a numerological fancy:³

And marvellous, stupendous happening! All the Leirtes whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to God's command, males of each family one month and upward, were twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and twenty-two books of divine authority in the Old Testament.....But what is even more wonderful is that the first-born of the children of Israel, for whom the sons of Levi were given, were males, of a month and upward, to the number of twenty-two thousand, two hundred seventy-three. Now the twenty-two, as we have said, agrees with the number of letters in the alphabet and of the books of the Old Testament, but in addition there are a double hundred (centenarium), a seven fold ten (denarium), and a simple three (ternarium), numbers most sacred in the divine letters.⁴

Agobard must have forgotten about this when, ten or fifteen years later, he attacked Amalarius.

Sacraments and Ministry.-- "The sacraments," Agobard wrote, "are so great and holy that they cannot be improved by the merits of good priests, nor soiled by the sinfulness of bad ones."⁵

¹PL, CIV, 327. ²See above p. 91.

³Consult V. F. Hopper, Medieval Number Symbolism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938). Hopper does not, however, deal with Agobard.

⁴PL, CIV, 133. Cf. Isidore, Etymologies, I, 3: "But the Hebrews have twenty-two letters of the alphabet according to the books of the Old Testament." (PL, LXXXII, 75).

⁵PL, CIV, 142.

His enumeration of the sacraments proves interesting but unoriginal: "The divine sacraments are baptism and the preparation of the body and blood of the Lord, and the others (ceteraque) by which the salvation and life of believers are established."¹ The definite listing of seven sacraments had to wait for Peter Lombard. Isidore of Seville mentioned only three, baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, as did Theodulf of Orleans.² It is impossible from Agobard's works to gather what other sacraments he had in mind: it is, however, to be noted that though he recognized more than the two Scriptural ones, he did give the place of honor to them.

It is clear that regarding the administration of the sacraments he was no Donatist, but followed the orthodox Augustinian mode of thought. That is obvious from the last paragraph, but a further quotation may be in order. He said that the sacraments are made ineffably efficacious "not by human virtue, but by the majesty of the Holy Ghost."³ Therefore the laity should not absent themselves from them because of the disrepute of the ministrant.⁴ This exhortation was in order, because those were not days of a glorious priesthood, as Agobard himself has shown.

In the same volume, On the Privilege and Rights of the Priesthood, he set forth the depths to which the clergy had fallen. After a series of quotations from the Bible describing the duties of priests and God's vengeance upon those who failed in their duties, he said: "We have brought together these few testimonies of the Old and New Testament in which as in a mirror we may see the filthiness of our time, filthiness to be lamented with a flood of tears."⁵ Almost everyone, he said, had a domestic priest whom he made to do as he wished not only in the divine offices, but also in human duties. Some of these private priests waited on tables, mixed wines, cared for the dogs and horses, and collected rents. These, he continued, are not good priests, but ignorant, criminal renegades.⁶ For all this, however, Agobard reminded the

¹Ibid.

²Consult P. Pourrat, Theology of the Sacraments, authorized translation from 3rd French edition (London: Herder, 1924).

³PL, CIV, 143. ⁴PL, CIV, 142. ⁵PL, CIV, 138.

⁶PL, CIV, 139.

people of his day that when good shepherds are lacking, Christ is not lacking, and when the situation apparently could not be remedied, the sheep must tolerate the mercenaries who sit in Moses' seat.¹

Unity and Concord of the Church.-- Agobard was a zealot for the unity of God's people. In his book, Against the Law of Gundobad, he interpreted Christ's missionary commission as a proclamation of such unity.² The prerequisite for praying the Lord's prayer was to be an unity made up of every nation, circumstance, sex, rank, reputation, and station.³ This condition he apostrophized:

O heavenly brotherhood, O eternal concord, O indivisible unity, derived from one author, restoring the unity of all things, through which the heavens are happy, the earth exults, the sea and its fulness are moved, the fields and all things which are in them rejoice, all the peoples clap their hands, they shout joyfully to God with the voice of exultation!⁴

Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition between "servant and master, poor and rich, unlearned and erudite, weak and strong, humble workingman and the lofty emperor."⁵ There remain, of course, divisions of obligations and labors, but Christ is all and in all.⁶

In Agobard's thought, this unity included not only "Gentile and Jew, barbarian and Scythian, Aquitanian and Langobard, Burgundian and Alaman, slave and free,"⁷ but also it reached back through the ages and took in the past peoples of God. The venerable abbot Fredegisus had said that the holy patriarchs and prophets, kings and priests of the Old Testament were not Christians.⁸ The reason he gave was that it was absurd that there should have

¹PL, CIV, 197. The Protestant, Heinrich Bullinger, in the third sermon of his fifth decade speaks similarly: "They [Donatists and Anabaptists] contend, that the ministry of the word and sacraments, executed by a minister whose life is unclean, becometh thereby of no value. But albeit a holy life be requisite in a minister, yet their ministry becometh not of no value through the minister's dishonest life, so his doctrine be sound and perfect." He then goes on to cite the Scriptural passage about the mercenaries in Moses' seat. H. Bullinger, The Decades, trans. H. I., ed. T. Harding (Cambridge: University Press, 1849ff.), VII, 161.

²PL, CIV, 113. ³PL, CIV, 114. ⁴PL, CIV, 114.

⁵Ibid. ⁶PL, CIV, 115. ⁷Ibid. ⁸PL, CIV, 169.

been Christians before Christ.¹ Agobard sprang into action at this:

Believe, venerable sir, that if you had said, "They were not called Christians," it would perhaps have been only a small blasphemy. But where you say, "They were not Christians," you unjustly blaspheme a great multitude of the saints.²

To Agobard, the abbot Fredegisus' statement was as though he had said there was a time when Christ was not.³ He then proceeded by citations to show that there never was such a time.⁴ He continued:

Likewise we believe that in the Old Testament not only all the holy patriarchs, but also many even of the Gentiles were anointed with invisible chrism, through which they were made members of Christ and one body with all those predestinated to eternal life.....⁵ There is no difference between them and us, except that the sacraments of salvation which have been wrought through the mediator for our sake and theirs - past ones save us, future ones saved them.⁶

The Last Days.-- Like many great Christians in troubled times, Agobard had a strain of early Christian dramatic eschatology in his thought; he felt that the latter days were at hand. This appeared in the books, On the Privilege and Rights of the Priesthood and On Jewish Superstitions. In the former, after having described the low estate of the clergy, he expressed his fear that these were the days of faithlessness when the Son of Man should come and not find faith on the earth.⁷ He compared his own time with the lean kine in the dream of Pharaoh. Former days of the Church were the fat kine, days of "teachers lofty in doctrine, shining in holiness, inflexible in defense of truth."⁸ But now the Church was listless and infirm in mind.⁹ Nevertheless, Agobard was not completely overwhelmed by pessimism: he believed that there would always be in the Church "most strong and robust fighters (pugnatores) for God."¹⁰

At the end of the work on Jewish superstitions, he made an expression of his fear that the crafty stratagem of Antichrist was approaching.¹¹ The charity of many was growing cold, iniquity was everywhere abounding, the boldness of the unbelievers was growing strong.¹² But once again his fundamental optimism

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³See above p. 76. ⁴PL, CIV, 170f.

⁵PL, CIV, 171f. ⁶PL, CIV, 173. ⁷PL, CIV, 141. ⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid. ¹⁰PL, CIV, 142. ¹¹PL, CIV, 100.

¹²Ibid. Cf. Theodulf of Orleans, Carmina, VI, 12: "It is easy to see that the world is passing, it shows its ruin, and with

asserted itself, because he thought the "most religious emperor" might take some measures in behalf of Christ.¹

Anticipations of Protestantism.-- There are some points in Agobard's writings that seem to be more or less anticipatory of the thought of the Protestant Reformers. This does not mean that Agobard can justifiably be called a real pre-Reformation Protestant to the same degree that John Wiclif and John Hus may be. It simply means that there are ideas and expressions in Agobard that bear striking resemblance to some of the ideas of the sixteenth century Reformers. Some of the ideas will be clear enough: for others there will be cited in the notes similar passages from Calvin, Luther might well be cited also, but the parallel is not so close.

Worship and Scripture.-- Agobard believed in a Scriptural worship, that is, in worship the bulk of which was made up of Scripture; as he said: "Therefore the divine majesty is not to be praised by the fictions of anyone, but only by the eloquent language of the Holy Ghost."² He evidently meant that he wanted a form of church worship purged of dangerous accretions. The form and content were to be judged by the standard of Scripture. This does not mean that Agobard wanted to throw away the main body of inherited traditional worship. The same may be said of Calvin and Luther. In the case of Luther, this is obvious; in the case of Calvin, less so.³ Even the service used by Zwingli, which is barer than Calvin's and Luther's, retains the faint shadow of the Mass.

Agobard contended that the mode of worship he enjoined rejected all human compositions.⁴ In the temple of God and before his altar, only divine words (divinorum eloquiorum melodia) should be used.⁵ In order to celebrate the divine praises without offense

failing voice it sings its own death....Desire, filth, perjury, lust, consuming envy, untruth, quarrels, strifes, deceit are all increasing." In PL, CV, 367. The idea of the world growing old found frequent expression in the Middle Ages.

¹PL, CIV, 100. ²PL, CIV, 330.

³Consult W. D. Maxwell, The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), and an Outline of Christian Worship (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), for a scholarly treatment of Calvinistic worship.

⁴PL, CIV, 330. ⁵PL, CIV, 327.

or doubt, one should use only divine words, because in them is no error nor equivocation.¹ Agobard even said that nothing should be sung in the congregation except what was taken from canonical Scripture (ex canonica Scriptura),² and from the most pure words of Holy Scripture (ex purissimis sanctae Scripturae verbis).³ One must note that he frequently quoted the Old Testament Apocrypha.⁴ But this apparently did not mean that he held those books to be a part of the canon. In one statement already quoted in this chapter he referred to the "twenty-two books of divine authority in the Old Testament."⁵ This numbering excluded the Apocrypha.

As noted above, however, he was not slavish in his devotion to the Bible; it was not a "paper pope." It certainly had priority of authority in the Church, but it must necessarily be interpreted. He admonished his Lyonnaise flock to follow "the authority of Holy Scripture, the decrees of the sacred canons, and the teachings and example of the catholic fathers."⁶ This placed the Bible first, but the councils and the fathers in a secondary and more or less advisory capacity. In the book against Fredegisus, he said that the firmest authority resided in the Old and New Testament in the original tongues, next in the Septuagint, then in Jerome's translation.⁷ After those, there were many interpreters, some good, some bad. These were not to be received equally, that is, "not with the necessity of believing but with the liberty of judging."⁸ Thus a certain suggestion of "private judgment" was made by Agobard.

¹PL, CIV, 328. ²PL, CIV, 337. ³PL, CIV, 338.

⁴PL, CIV, 120, 147, 152. ⁵See above p. 103.

⁶PL, CIV, 331. Cf. the following from Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, I, 8, 13: "....but these [the consent of the Church and the testimony of the saints and martyrs] may not be sufficient of themselves to produce a firm faith in Scripture until the heavenly Father manifest his presence in it, and thereby secure reverence for it. Then only, therefore, does Scripture suffice for the saving knowledge of God when its certainty has been established by the interior persuasion of the Holy Ghost. These human testimonies which go to confirm it will not be without effect, if they are used in subordination to that chief and highest proof, as secondary helps to our weakness." John Calvin, Opera Selecta, ed. P. Barth and W. Niesel (Munich: Kaiser, Vol. I, 1926; Vol. III, 1928; Vol. IV, 1931; Vol. V, 1936), III, 81. I have been assisted in my translation by the translation of H. Beveridge (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1895).

⁷PL, CIV, 164. ⁸PL, CIV, 165.

Rejection of Philosophers.-- Agobard had a robust disrespect for philosophers of religion. With him the very word philosopher came near being a term of opprobrium. He told Fredegisus:

You will find that the nobility of the divine eloquence does not consist, as you assert, in the parading of an elevated style as the manner of the philosophers is, but rather in the virtue of the sentiments expressed....It is clear that the nobility of Holy Scripture consists not according to the philosophers in the eloquence of language in which there is no wisdom, but in the power and the wisdom of the meaning, and in the virtue of the sentiments.¹

In the book against Amalarius, he once dismissed a certain theory by scornfully remarking, "That is a comment of the philosophers!"² He then opposed to it the Scripture by saying: "The authority of Scripture shows that one should think otherwise."³

Imputed Goodness.-- It is not to be expected that Agobard should have said anything about imputed righteousness or justice. There is, however, in one of his writings, the Exhortatory Sermon, a faint suggestion of it, in the form of imputed goodness.⁴ He has said that man does no good things for which God is not responsible. Even when man wishes to do good to please the divine will, it is nevertheless God who really does it. God loves us not for what we are by our own merit, but for what we will be by his gift (*Tales nos amat Deus, quales futuri sumus ipsius dono, non quales*

¹PL, CIV, 167. ²PL, CIV, 345.

³Ibid. Cf. Institutes, I, 5, 12: "...but if you look closely at all philosophers, you will find that they are as vanishing smoke," (Opera Selecta, III, 56). Institutes, III, 61: "The only difference is that they [the philosophers], under the influence of ambition, sedulously affect an exquisite perspicuity of arrangement, by which they exhibit their genius....Scripture holds to a most beautiful economy [of words], and is much more certain than all the philosophers," (Opera Selecta, IV, 147). Institutes, III, 7, 2: "The philosophers who ever contend that virtue should be sought for its own sake, have been so inflated with such arrogance that it is apparent that they seek virtue for no other reason than that they might have something about which to boast," (Opera Selecta, IV, 152).

⁴PL, CIV, 277. Cf. Institutes, II, 5, 15: "Whatever there is of good in the will comes from the movement of the Spirit alone" (Opera Selecta, III, 315). Institutes, III, 11, 23: "...man is not just in himself, but the justice of Christ is communicated to him by inspiration, while he is strictly deserving of punishment...." (Opera Selecta, IV, 206). Institutes, III, 22, 6: "The Lord most clearly proclaims that there is no reason in men themselves for him to be kind to them: but he takes a reason from his mercy alone; therefore, their salvation is his own work," (Opera Selecta, IV, 385).

sumus nostro merito¹.¹ God foresees, foreknows, aids, and rewards his own good in us. Only God is good in his own right, but men are good not with their own good but with God's.² This, Agobard affirmed, was the faith and hope of the Catholic Church.³

Faith and Works.-- In Agobard's thinking faith preceded works. He wrote that though many who have believed correctly have perished through sinful living, nevertheless the merely moral person is not saved apart from faith.⁴ This element in his thought was set forth in the work against Felix of Urgel. One who would please God must be humble, and the first step in humility was faith. Of course, after faith followed the precepts of right living. When both of these are kept hope might be strengthened and charity nourished.⁵

Priesthood of all Believers.-- To Bernard of Vienne he wrote that all faithful members of Jesus Christ have been made by him a kingdom of priests to the Father (Patri regnum et sacerdotes).⁶

¹PL, CIV, 277. ²Ibid. ³Ibid. ⁴PL, CIV, 35.

⁵Ibid. Cf. Institutes, III, 18, 4: "Scripture leaves us nothing of which we may glory in God's sight; rather it is entirely concerned with repressing, humbling, casting down, and completely crushing our arrogance," (Opera Selecta, IV, 273). Institutes, III, 14, 21: "...the effective cause of our salvation is in the love of God the Father; the material cause, in the obedience of the Son; the instrumental cause, in the illumination of the Spirit, that is, in faith; the final cause is in the glory of God's great kindness. All this is the work of God alone, although he may use works as lesser causes. But how so? Those whom in his mercy he has destined to the inheritance of eternal life, he, in his ordinary dispensation, introduces to the possession of it by means of good works. What precedes in the order of administration is called the cause of what follows. For this reason, he sometimes makes eternal life a consequent of good works; not that it when received is to be referred to them, but that whom he has chosen, he justifies and at length glorifies; and in a certain manner makes the prior grace to be a kind of cause, because it is a kind of step to that which follows. But whenever the true cause is to be assigned, he bids us not to take refuge in works, but to keep our thoughts entirely fixed on the mercy of God," (Opera Selecta, IV, 288f.).

⁶PL, CIV, 127. Cf. Institutes, II, 15, 6: "For we who in ourselves are polluted, in him being priestly, offer to God ourselves and our all, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary, that the sacrifices of prayers and praise which are brought by us may be pleasing and of a sweet odor in God's sight....To this effect are the words of Christ, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself,' for being clothed with his holiness, inasmuch as he has devoted us to the Father with himself, we please him as if we were pure and clean, or even sacred," (Opera Selecta, III, 481). Institutes, IV,

When the law began to be given to Moses, the paschal lamb was not to be offered by priests but by the whole congregation (universo coetu) of the children of Israel.¹ Cain and Abel were the first to perform a priestly office. Cain's offering was rejected because it was for himself, not for the people. Sacrifices for others are never rejected. Thus the priesthood was simply a practical arrangement: the priests did representatively for the people what actually was the people's sacrifice. Before the law, all the firstborn were priests, for example, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job.² But under the law this duty was taken over by the tribe of Levi.³ This argument Agobard used for a twofold purpose. First, priests should not presume to think that they were by virtue of their priesthood exempt from the rules of conduct laid upon the laity.⁴ Secondly, the lay people must not place all the blame on bad priests but also on themselves.⁵

The Ministry.-- A priest's primary duty, according to Agobard, was to teach what the Lord had commanded.⁶ He was not expected to be original, but only a mouthpiece. His authority derived not from himself, his office, or the Church, but only from God. If a priest should teach something other than what God had commanded, it would be a case of a leper leading a leper, or the blind leading the blind.⁷

18, 17: "From this office of sacrificing, all we Christians are called a royal priesthood, because by Christ we offer to God that sacrifice of praise spoken of by the Apostle, the fruit of lips expressing his name. We do not appear in God's sight with our gifts, without an intercessor. He is Christ, by whose mediatorial intercession we offer our gifts to the Father. He is our high-priest, who opens for us an access into the sanctuary of heaven. He is the altar, where we place our gifts, that in we may dare whatever we dare. It is he who has made us a kingdom of priests to the Father," (Opera Selecta, V, 432).

¹PL, CIV, 128. ²PL, CIV, 133. ³Ibid.

⁴PL, CIV, 136f. ⁵PL, CIV, 132.

⁶PL, CIV, 137. Cf. Institutes, IV, 8, 8: "For Christ thus defined the terms of their embassy when he commanded them to go and teach, not what they themselves had rashly fabricated, but whatsoever he commanded," (Opera Selecta, V, 140). Institutes, IV, 8, 9: "....therefore God deprives man of the power of producing any new doctrine, in order that he alone may be our master in spiritual teachings," (Opera Selecta, V, 142).

⁷PL, CIV, 136f.

Although Agobard was by no means a Donatist, he nevertheless thought the bishops should be careful to ordain good men so as not to scandalize the people.¹ He exhorted the clergy and monks of Lyons to give attention to preaching and the rule of the Church, not to riches, hunting, gluttony, drunkenness.² He who was thus sinfully negligent was not a co-worker with God, but rather a destroyer of God's work, and a co-worker with Antichrist (destructor operis Dei ac....adjutor Antichristi).³ Agobard even went so far as to say that, although in the eyes of men he appeared to be a priest, he was not one in the eyes of God.⁴ He compared such pseudo-priests with adulterers who desired not offspring but the satisfaction of lust.⁵ So, he said, these have not undertaken the ministry of the Word (administrationem Verbi) for the salvation of their hearers or the edification of the Church, but for the satisfaction of their own wills.⁶

Therefore not only do heretics weaken the Word of God by mixing their deceptions with it, but also all those who hasten to achieve temporal honors and riches by means of the sacred ministry, and also those who cannot rise to honors and riches but desire only to gain daily food and shelter from the sacred ministry. Therefore they preach in order that they may receive; they do not speak from sincerity as from God, and in the presence of God; but they walk about in subtlety; they do not renounce the hidden things of dishonor, but rather embrace them....⁷

Councils.-- Agobard was something of a conciliarist. At any rate he believed in gathering together synods to discuss particular matters, especially to remedy evils. In Concerning the Privilege and Rights of the Priesthood, after having described the low estate of the clergy, he expressed the hope that by God's aid a synod should be summoned for the purpose of inquiry.⁸ In Against the Law of Gundobad, he defended the authority of Gallican councils, especially on the ground of the eminence and reputation

¹PL, CIV, 139f. Cf. Institutes, IV, 3, 12: "...none are to be chosen save those who are of sound doctrine and holy lives, and not notorious in any defect which might destroy their authority and bring disgrace on the ministry....And Paul, after portraying the character of a good and genuine bishop, admonishes Timothy not to contaminate himself by choosing an improper person for the office," (Opera Selecta, V, 53).

²PL, CIV, 192f. ³PL, CIV, 193. ⁴PL, CIV, 194.

⁵PL, CIV, 195. ⁶Ibid. ⁷PL, CIV, 195. ⁸PL, CIV, 141.

of the bishops who sat in them.¹ He cited Christ's promise to be present wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, then asked:

How much more, where twenty or thirty have been gathered together, not only in the Lord's name, but especially when those assembled are so endowed with faith, illustrious in wisdom, eminent in life, to be revered for their holiness, and to be feared by their signs and miracles?²

It is true that he did not accord them the same reverence due a general council, because of the greater acceptance of them (ex totius mundi consensu congregatorum et receptorum).³ But general councils have not defined everything, therefore regard must be had for the decisions of smaller synods in necessary details.⁴

The Papacy.-- One notes the conspicuous absence of reference to the pope in the passages cited. Agobard has declared that the authority of a general council was derived "from the consent of the whole world of those assembled and of those receiving it,"⁵ not from the presence or consent of the pope or his legates. So in another book, Regarding the Management of Ecclesiastical Properties, he dealt definitely with this point. He said: "There are those who think that Gallican canons or those of other regions ought not to be received unless papal or imperial legates were present at their adoption."⁶ Were this necessary, it would be consistent to reject the teachings of the fathers, because papal or imperial legates were not present when they wrote. Then Agobard became more serious:

Those seem to me to think better, who, in accordance with the Lord's word, do not doubt that the Lord is indeed among them when they know that two or three are gathered together in his name, and who believe that he who will not hear the Church should be considered as a gentile and a publican. For wherever the catholic rulers of the churches come together in the

¹PL, CIV, 122. ²PL, CIV, 122f. ³PL, CIV, 123.

⁴Ibid. For a brief account of Protestant conciliaristic thought, see J. T. McNeill, Unitive Protestantism (New York: Abingdon, 1929), where this whole matter is treated. Cf. Institutes, IV, 9, 1: "I venerate them [the ancient councils] from my heart, and would have all to hold them in due honor," (Opera Selecta, V, 151). Institutes, IV, 9, 2: "If we consult Scripture on the authority of councils, there is no promise more remarkable than that which is contained in these words of our Savior, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' But this is just as applicable to any particular synod as to a universal council," (Opera Selecta, V, 151).

⁵PL, CIV, 123. ⁶PL, CIV, 241.

interest of the churches with the fear of God and in his name and honor, whatever they establish agreeably to the Holy Scriptures ought not to be rejected by any one but should be deeply venerated by all....¹

Some years later, in the conflict of Louis the Pious and his sons, the sons appealed to Pope Gregory IV for aid. Agobard was a partisan of the rebellious sons, and thus naturally desirous of papal intervention. At this point then he wrote a letter to the emperor, A Comparison of Ecclesiastical with Political Rule, and How the Dignity of the Church Outshines the Majesty of Empires. This was a defense, or rather a presentation, of the authority of the Roman see, apparently a contradiction of his previous views on the subject. He presented the claims in high terms culled from Pope Gelasius I,² Pope Leo I,³ and the then Pope Gregory IV.⁴

This contradiction in Agobard cannot be satisfactorily explained to his credit. This, however, may be said, that at no point in the letter did he explicitly say that he agreed with the men whom he quoted. It would seem that this was a matter of political expediency. Agobard was for the Church as against the State, but apparently within the Church, he was for the councils rather than the pope.

Against Images.-- Agobard wrote a remarkable "book against the superstition of those who think that adoration ought to be offered to the pictures and likenesses of the saints." In it he modestly condemned the practice. His argument, heavily laden with quotations from the fathers and doctors, ran in somewhat the following manner. The first commandment did not absolutely prohibit all likenesses, for one has only to recall the description of the decorations in Solomon's temple.⁵ Indeed the ancient Christians prepared pictures of the Lord and the apostles, but for the sake of love and remembrance rather than for veneration.⁶ Certainly the representation of Christ on the cross would be a living lesson in the Lord's life for those who cannot read.⁷ But, for all this, God is more purely venerated without likenesses, for sacred things may be usurped for sacrilegious uses.⁸ The bronze serpent which did so much good in the days of Moses had become by the days

¹PL, CIV, 242. ²PL, CIV, 294. ³PL, CIV, 295f.

⁴PL, CIV, 297. ⁵PL, CIV, 216. ⁶PL, CIV, 215.

⁷PL, CIV, 216. ⁸PL, CIV, 218.

of Hezekiah such an object of idolatrous worship that Hezekiah ordered it to be destroyed.¹ For faith may pass, and all trust be placed in the visible.²

Closely related to the narrower subject of representation is the wider subject of mediation between God and man. Pictures may be such a means of mediation, as also saints and angels may be. Agobard again was moderate in his criticism. Man, he said, may indeed show us God, but worship is to be given to God not to the man. Paul and Barnabas in Lycaonia refused to receive the worship of the people.³

Let sacrifice be made to God alone, either by the mystery of the body and blood, by which we have been redeemed, or by the sacrifice of an humble and contrite heart. Let angels and holy men be loved and honored with charity, not with service Let us not place our hope in man but in God.....⁴ But because no one is equal with God, no other one is essentially Jesus, that is, Savior, let us believe the apostle, let us yield to divine authority, let us bow the knee in the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus alone.⁵

For, Agobard had taught, there is no other mediator between God and man save him who is both God and man.⁶

Agobard had now expressed himself as mildly opposed to the use of representations in worship, and to the veneration of the saints: he also was not in accord with another popular devotion, the pilgrimage. In his extant sermon, he summoned the people to come and worship, "for he is near, so near that in him we live and move and have our being."⁷ "For it is not necessary," he declared rather scornfully, "for you to go from place to place, from this kingdom to another people, to seek God."⁸

Political Thought

Emperor and Empire.-- Agobard addressed six of his twenty-five writings to the emperor, Louis the Pious. In the introductions, he used the most servile language characteristic of that and other periods. He always gave Louis superlative epithets, and described himself as "your humble servant,"⁹ or once as "most abject of all your servants."¹⁰ One of his earliest works, Against the Dogma of Felix of Urgel, he presented to the emperor

¹Ibid. ²PL, CIV, 225. ³PL, CIV, 203. ⁴PL, CIV, 221.

⁵PL, CIV, 227. ⁶PL, CIV, 202. ⁷PL, CIV, 267.

⁸PL, CIV, 268. ⁹PL, CIV, 30, 77, 287. ¹⁰PL, CIV, 69.

for his consideration: if the emperor should approve, it would be commended to the general public, but if not, then the author would correct it.¹ Later, in his mournful letter on the division of the empire, he expressed his agreement with the apostle that everyone should be subject to the higher powers.²

Much as Agobard considered it his duty to be a loyal subject of the secular authority, he considered it even more his duty to admonish the emperor, and this he did not hesitate to do. He insisted that the way for the people of God to be faithful to Louis the Pious was to make him aware of any peril coming upon him.³ Men were murmuring against the emperor, and his sons were threatening rebellion.⁴ So Agobard dared to tell Louis that it was the will of God, "that you vouchsafe to hear and weigh calmly these suggestions which I am making."⁵ He then proceeded to give the emperor some advice.⁶

Agobard had more regard for the empire than for the person of the emperor. In the conflicts of Louis and his sons, Agobard supported the sons, because to his mind the old emperor by his actions was dividing the empire, whereas the sons seemed to be partisans of the unity of the empire. Louis had first legally associated his son Lothair with him as co-emperor, but had later repudiated this arrangement without legal process. To Agobard, this was striking at the law of the empire.⁷ The emperor was acting contrary to God's will.⁸

The unity, and therefore the peace, of the empire was a prominent idea in Agobard's two books, Against the Law of Gundobad and Against the Judgment of God. He stressed the need of one law for the empire: "Would that it might please almighty God for all to be subject to one law under one most religious king!"⁹ As one will recall, the usage at this time was the principle of the "personality of law." The result of this principle in the empire was dramatically demonstrated thus by Agobard:

It often happens that five men may be walking or sitting together, and no one of them have in common with another the same law in external transitory affairs, although within they are governed in eternal matters by the one law of Christ.¹⁰

¹PL, CIV, 31f. ²PL, CIV, 287. ³PL, CIV, 287, 291f.

⁴PL, CIV, 289, 291. ⁵PL, CIV, 288. ⁶PL, CIV, 289f.

⁷PL, CIV, 290. ⁸Ibid. ⁹PL, CIV, 126. ¹⁰PL, CIV, 116.

His criticism of this condition was chiefly grounded in the fundamental universality of Christianity, but there were also practical considerations having to do with the good of the civil state. It happens, he said in substance, that Christians cannot help to bring criminals and wrong-doers to justice, because the wrong-doer may be living under a different law from the one under which the Christian is living; because of this the Christian's testimony is not accepted.¹ And, according to Agobard, it is certainly the duty of Christians to try to bring wicked men to justice by testifying in the courts against them.²

Peace.-- Next to unity Agobard loved and longed for the internal peace of the empire. In the Mournful Letter, he almost frantically reminded Louis of the increasing strife in the realm, and reproached him: "If you only wished, you could live a tranquil and quiet life with your sons, as your father and grandfather did."³ When he wrote his Book of Apology, the first revolt of the sons against Louis was in progress. Agobard was so worried by this state of affairs that he reminded Louis of the prayer "that barbarians should be subject to the most Christian emperor, not that his subjects be disturbed and barbarized by him."⁴ All who love God should lend their efforts to stamp out this iniquity without any bloodshed, bitterness, and turbulence.⁵

Indeed Agobard considered all violence wrong. This appeared in his attacks on the so-called "judgment of God." God, he said, cannot be served by the animosities of men.⁶ "If the Lord's disciples are known by love, then the Devil's disciples are known by strife and contention."⁷ Referring particularly to the sin of trial by ordeal, but certainly having a broader application was his statement, "Soldiers of Christ, who truly have the virtue of charity, conquered the world to the faith of Christ, not by killing, but by dying (non occidendo, sed moriendo)."⁸ And again, "Truth is declared by dying, not by killing."⁹ It is worthy of mention that, though Agobard desired that Jews and heretics be subjected to political and ecclesiastical disabilities, he did not advocate the use of any form of violence against them.

¹Ibid. ²PL, CIV, 117. ³PL, CIV, 288. ⁴PL, CIV, 313.

⁵PL, CIV 315. ⁶PL, CIV, 251. ⁷PL, CIV, 258.

⁸PL, CIV, 118. ⁹Ibid.

It might almost be said that he approximates the attitude which in modern times is called pacifism.

Agobard realized, however, that adversaries must be fought, though not with weapons of violence. In his Sermon, he said that Christians on earth have many enemies,

against whom one should not fight with arms, but with long-suffering tolerance....against whom one should not fight with corporeal arms, but with spiritual ones, namely with examples, that is, with the authority of the Scriptures, and the reasonings of faith and truth....against whom one should fight, not only by reason, but also by labor, abstinence, continence, vigils....¹

Justice.-- Not only was Agobard opposed generally to violence, but specifically he was against the judicial ordeal. He wrote two books on this subject, one addressed directly to the emperor, the other unaddressed. He devoted some space in both to show that trial by combat was contrary to Scripture. God's will, he said, was not to be determined by such means. Often the good were slain instead of the bad, the just instead of the unjust.² Truly then such a law that permitted combat was no law, but a slaughter (vere hoc non est lex, sed nex).³ Agobard, however, made it quite clear that he believed in the necessity of courts of justice, criminals were not to be allowed to go scot-free.⁴ But real justice should consist in discussion of causes and exactness of investigation.⁵ The true judgment of God according to Scripture was administered by judges whom God had set up in the cities.⁶

On the other hand, Agobard seemed to put no great faith in the administration of the law in his time. He wrote a complaint to his friend Matfred, a court-official. In it he described the break-down of justice in strong language, and exhorted Matfred to use his influence at court to have this state of affairs remedied. Fear of kings and laws, he said, had died out in many, and if by chance the case at law should come up before the palace-officials, there pressure could always be exerted in favor of the wrong-doer. He quoted the wrong-doers:

If any complaint about me should come to the palace, the case will be given to the lawyers. There I will find many relatives or friends, through whom it will doubtless come about that I will not incur royal disfavor, because a hidden

¹PL, CIV, 276. ²PL, CIV, 119, 254. ³PL, CIV, 121.

⁴PL, CIV, 121, 252. ⁵PL, CIV, 120. ⁶PL, CIV, 250.

gift will extinguish wrath, and he who is to be feared will overlook our follies....¹

Judges might be bought, sentences remitted, innocent ones suffer.²

Independence of the Church.-- Agobard saw clearly the danger that lay in secular control of ecclesiastical possessions. This, as he pointed out, was contrary to church law, but there were men who claimed that new necessities were rising up which made disobedience to this law inevitable.³ This he vigorously denied, and proceeded to prove from Scripture his position. His best illustration was the story of Achan's trespass.⁴ In his time laymen were presuming to sell church lands and churches. But he steadfastly affirmed that "to love the house of God is religious; to neglect it, irreligious; to destroy it, impious."⁵ It must be noted that he criticized in this regard not only laypeople, but also bishops, abbots, and other clerics.⁶ The ones who were being especially hard-pressed (cruciantur) by this misuse were the Church's poor.⁷

One of the reasons why he levelled his attack at the weathermakers was that they deflected the tithes from the Church. It was foolishness, according to Scripture, to think that these men had any real power.⁸ But "this foolishness is not the least portion of faithlessness."⁹

There are many who never willingly pay the tithe to the clergy, nor give to widows and orphans and other needy ones the alms to which they are constantly preached, often read and even exhorted: they will not heed. But they voluntarily make the payment to the weathermen, with no one preaching it, no one admonishing it, no one exhorting it, though doubtless the devil entices them....This is not a portion, but almost the plenitude of faithlessness!¹⁰

Slavery.-- Unlike his contemporary Smaragdus, abbot of St. Mihiel,¹¹ Agobard accepted the institution of slavery. In

¹PL, CIV, 187. ²Ibid. ³PL, CIV, 230. ⁴PL, CIV, 233.

⁵PL, CIV, 239. ⁶PL, CIV, 247-249. ⁷PL, CIV, 250.

⁸PL, CIV, 155f. ⁹PL, CIV, 156. ¹⁰PL, CIV, 157.

¹¹Smaragdus' works are in PL, CII, 15-873. In Via Regia, c. 30, he begs the king not to allow slavery in his kingdom. He says: "Imitate him [God] faithfully, with whom you hope to reign eternally." Then he supports his plea by the citation of appropriate Scripture passages, such as Deut. 14: 17; Amos 1: 6, 9; 2: 6; Isa. 58: 6; Eccclus. 7: 22, 23; Jer. 34: 13ff. Cf. PL, CII, 967f.

his letter Against the Impious Command, he stated that some are masters and others are slaves because of sins and God's secret judgment.¹ But Agobard did not believe that the master should have complete control over the slave. Indeed, he said that though the slave's bodily service was due to his lord, nevertheless in the inner man (interiorem hominem), which was fashioned in God's likeness, he was subject only to God.² He referred to slaves who were renewed in the knowledge of God, and thus made free in the inner man (in interiore homine) from all bondage.³ Thus he recognized the personality rights of the slaves. This appeared in a little more elaborate form in his Consideration and Entreaty Regarding the Baptism of Jewish Slaves:

Every man is a creature of God, and in any man, though he be a slave, the Lord God who created him in the womb, who brought him to the light of life, who guarded his life, who preserved his health, has a greater portion than the one who, because he has paid twenty or thirty solidi, enjoys the service of his body. There is no one who doubts that each slave, though owing the works of the members of his body to his earthly master, owes the religion of his mind to the Creator alone.⁴

This was a recognition of a condition, but also the attempt, to alleviate it as much as possible.

He and other Christians of his day made a practice of redeeming slaves who became converts to the Christian religion. It was one of his main quarrels with the Jews that they would not sell the slaves, though Agobard offered them the statutory prices.⁵ He mentioned this again in his letter against the impious command: "If any of them should come to baptism, and if the bishop or any Christian should so desire, let them have the right of redeeming them: this is what we wish most cheerfully (libentissime) to do."⁶

The Jews.-- Too much attention has been focussed from time to time upon Agobard's so-called anti-Semitic expressions, an attention out of all proportion to the other elements in his thought. Graetz, in characteristic fashion, presumes to call him "Haman-Agobard."⁷ This, however, has been met by the English scholar, A. Lukyn Williams.⁸

¹PL, CIV, 177. ²Ibid. ³Ibid. ⁴PL, CIV, 103.

⁵PL, CIV, 105. ⁶PL, CIV, 178.

⁷H. Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1894), III, 166.

⁸A. Lukyn Williams, "Haman-Agobard or St. Agobard," Church Quarterly Review, CXV (1933), 67-78.

Agobard's criticism of the Jews of his day was essentially a religious criticism. If there were an economic motive to his attacks, it certainly does not appear in his writings. The Jews to whom he objected were well-to-do, as is proven by the fact that they owned slaves. But, as stated above, Agobard and other interested Christians were most willing to reimburse these Jews for the loss of slaves who had become Christians, converts. "The attempt to develop a very elaborate picture of their [the Jews'] economic life is specious, inasmuch as our sources are so few and incomplete." Thus a recent Jewish scholar disposes of the Jewish economic threat to the Christians of Agobard's day.¹

His criticism then was religious. He claimed the right to baptize the Gentile slaves of Jews: the Jews were controverting this right.² Some Christians were attending Jewish services and keeping Jewish customs: this was naturally anathema to Agobard, as to most Christians.³ For the purity of Christianity he wanted his parishioners and other Christians to avoid Jewish associations.⁴

Agobard was no fanatic. At no point did he advocate violence. He was not ignorant of things Jewish, but on the contrary was quite conversant with their teachings,⁵ and may indeed have known some Hebrew.⁶ He evidently had personal dealings from time to time with them, and thus knew them more intimately than simply by hearsay.⁷ In fact, he once said of himself, Bernard of Vienne, and Ebor of Chalon: "This [certain Jewish teachings and practices] is very well known to us, who, speaking with them almost daily, hear the mysteries of their error."⁸ The fact must also be recognized that the Jews by their aggressiveness had to a certain extent invited his criticism.⁹

Freedom of Conscience.-- This last heading might have been placed under Agobard's religious thought as well as here. It has appeared incidentally throughout his writings in many connections. As all Christians must, Agobard believed that in the last analysis

¹S. Katz, The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1937), 126.

²PL, CIV, 102-106, 175, 176, 178. ³PL, CIV, 75, 111.

⁴PL, CIV, 107-114. ⁵PL, CIV, 77-100. ⁶PL, CIV, 164;

⁷PL, CIV, 70, 73, 105. ⁸PL, CIV, 86. ⁹PL, CIV, 69-76.

a man's conscience is subject only to God. He accorded this right even to slaves: men might own their bodies, but not their final allegiance.¹

Conclusion

Our study of Agobard has now come to a close. We turn from him with mingled feelings. One is that of pathetic futility. The world which Agobard sought to stabilize and improve was crumbling about him as he passed from the scene. His moderate attitude toward the Jews would be carried on into fanatical anti-Semitism by Amulo, his successor in the see of Lyons. His commonsense view of the Bible would not last long before the vagaries of allegorical interpretation on the one hand, and crass literalism on the other. His theory of a worship judged by the norm of "the pure Word of God" would be accepted by only one writing disciple, his loyal deacon, Florus, and even he would exhibit some indications of divergence from it toward the mystical. His longing for peace and the absence of violence would be horribly disappointed in the coming struggles of the sons of Louis; and his desire for the unity of empire would suffer defeat three years after his death in the treaty of Verdun, (843).

Our other feeling, as we leave this study, is the more pleasant one of calm, indeed almost complacent, assurance. We have seen Agobard as a man of his day. He was not a brilliant exception, like John Scotus Erigena, nor a towering figure, like Hincmar of Rheims, nor a person of such high tragedy, as the hapless monk Gottschalk. Agobard was essentially unoriginal: he was largely indebted to Augustine and the letter of Scripture for most of his theology, and to the memory of Charlemagne and the exigencies of circumstance for much of his politics. His thought for the most part can be paralleled, in the writings of various ones of his contemporaries, though there are gleams of apparent independence, as in his attitude toward the Bible, and in his opposition to the increasing allegorization of worship. In brief, Agobard was one of those normal, yet superior, men of intelligence to whom, rather than to the unusual, an age looks for stability, one of those men of whom we may quote Scripture used in another context, "They will maintain the fabric of the world."²

¹PL, CIV, 103, 177.

²Ecclus. 38: 34.

